

VR Program Celebrates 100 Years

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is celebrating its national centennial!

To recognize 100 years of service, here's a history of VR in Arizona.

Vocational Rehabilitation Centennial

June 2, 2020, marks Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program's 100th anniversary. The Arizona VR program within the Department of Economic Security (DES) is dedicated to helping Arizonans with disabilities achieve self-sufficiency through sustainable and fulfilling employment. Take a look through just a handful of the program's successes over the years.

The Concept of VR -1920

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson created the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program which became the Arizona Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) a year later.

VR Helps Thousands -1967

From 1921 to 1970, VR helped 12,000 individuals with disabilities acquire the skills they needed to secure gainful employment.

VR Helps Mechanic Return to Work -1967

Bill Lutz was a mechanic who lost both his legs in an accident. The VR program assisted him with training and resources to get back to the shop.

Vocational Training for Arizona Inmates -1968

Inmates at the Florence Prison Complex gained valuable workforce training to help prepare them for reentry success upon release through a collaboration between Vocational Education and VR.

Vocational Training for Arizona Inmates -1969

Inmates at the Florence Prison Complex participated in vocational training including metalwork, auto mechanical, upholstery and more.

Florence Vocational Training-1971

Inmates at the Florence Prison Complex learn how to upholster and build furniture.

Department of Economic Security -1974

DVR, along with other state divisions, united under the Department of Economic Security in 1974. The VR program was incorporated under the Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

RSA Client of the Year -1992

Jeffery Yarborough was nominated as RSA client of the year in 1992. The VR program helped Jeffery through the Beacon Foundation, and with a lot of hard work, he was offered a position with the foundation.

VR Assists Client Through College Success -1992

Phyllis Leonhardt received assistance from the VR program throughout college. She went on to receive a degree from the University of Arizona.

Client Returns to Old Job with Help from VR -2005

Carlos Juarez became ill with leukemia and lost most of his vision. VR helped him gain skills to get back to work at America West Airlines.

VR Supplies Client with Items Needed to Start New Job -2005

Steven Smith received assistance from VR to get a job at Arby's. The program helped him acquire glasses, hearing aids, and work clothes.

VR Utilizes Tech to Help Client Travel Large Campus -2016

"Now I will feel confident about getting to class, and not have to worry about my legs hurting or being out of breath. They have truly helped me to do what I want to do. Now I can go to college because of them."

Hailey Hendrikse's disability created a barrier for her to commute on a large college campus. But with the help of DES VR, she obtained a custom scooter to help her get around at the school of her dreams.

Client with Hearing Loss Regains Confidence and Employment with help from VR -2018

Wayne Byram lost his job because of hearing loss is now gainfully employed from the help of DES VR. "I went in with zero confidence. My counselor bent over backward to help me and got me where I am today."

VR Provides Yuma Man Resources to Succeed - 2020

Ramon Ramirez worked as a meat handler and butcher for 30 years, when diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma began to restrict his vision and he developed sensorineural hearing loss. When he had a hard time reading and communicating with customers about their orders, he knew he had to get assistance, so he turned to the DES VR. VR helped Ramon acquire hearing aids, bioptic glasses to improve his vision at work and while driving, and a RUBY magnifying device to help him read small print.

100 Years Later-2020

The VR program continues to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for and obtain gainful employment.

For more information about the DES VR program, please visit the [Vocational Rehabilitation web page](#).

